

All Saints Day
November 6, 2022
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Revelation 21:1-6
He Makes Everything New

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is on the front cover of the service folder and we will sing the words in our next hymn.

“We feebly struggle; they in glory shine”

On this celebration of All Saints Sunday, we remember all the believers who have gone before us and now enjoy the glory of God in eternal life. We rejoice that all believers who have died are now with the Lord in heaven. While the church militant on earth continues to struggle, the saints triumphant shine in heaven. While we who are at the same time saint and sinner struggle in this life, those who are only saints shine in heaven. What comfort this gives us when remembering our loved ones who died in faith.

“We feebly struggle; they in glory shine.”

That’s the way it is now. There is a vast difference between what believers experience on earth and what believers experience in heaven. But one day this difference will pass away. One day all believers will experience the same thing from the Lord. One day, Jesus will make everything new. The apostle John is given a vision of what that day will be like in...

Revelation 21:1-6 (EHV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea no longer existed. And I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And from the throne I heard a loud voice that said, “Look! God’s dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away.” The one who was seated on the throne said to me, “Look, I am making everything new!” He also said, “Write, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me: It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To anyone who is thirsty, I will give freely from the spring of the water of life.

Did you hear all the new things in John’s description? New heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem, new everything! We like new things. It is exciting to think that everything will be made new by Christ because there is so much that leads to struggle and pain now.

Why do we look forward to a new heaven and new earth? Because this world is broken and under the curse of sin. The sea is beautiful and full of life and wealth, but it also causes destruction and death through hurricanes and tsunamis. The sun is wonderful until it burns our skin and leads to cancer. The earth is beautiful when it produces flowers, trees and crops to eat. But it is frightening when drought and storm and fires threaten lives. Since the fall into sin, just living in this world is a struggle.

Pain in childbirth and hard work to earn a living and eat are two of the constant reminders that we live in a world under the curse of sin. And there are so many more. Violence and war are a plague on this world. Death and disease are a literal plague. Every one of us in this room has some struggle in this

world. It might be a family struggle, addiction struggle, financial struggle, temptation struggle and so on. It all seems a bit hopeless, doesn't it?

Why continue to struggle in this sin-cursed world? Wouldn't it be easier to just give up the struggle against sin and temptation? Give in and life will be easier promises the devil. And the devil yells to us that we should give up on trusting God to help us. Look at all the trouble we have in this world. Either God doesn't exist or he doesn't care since there is so much evil in the world. Give up on God, says the devil. And the devil will also attempt to drive people, including believers, to give up on life itself. Take your life and your pain will be over, the struggle will end, says the devil who has been lying since the beginning. Yes, we feebly struggle in this world of sin.

Yet, we continue to struggle because our Lord has promised to make everything new. Christ gives us a certain hope for the future. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were scared of God and hid from him in the Garden of Eden. God's plan before sin was to dwell with his people. God's plan for the future is to dwell with his people.

And from the throne I heard a loud voice that said, "Look! God's dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God."

The only way for the Lord to dwell in peace with sinful people is to remove our sin forever. Therefore, the Son of God was born of Mary and made his dwelling with us. The Son of God became one of us, lived among us, lived perfectly for us and died to forgive every sin. Since Christ humbled himself to dwell with us for a time and die in our place, our God will dwell with us forever when Christ returns in glory on the Last Day. The curse of sin was overcome by Christ.

Instead of the filth of our sin, this is how our God will see us on that day:

And I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Jerusalem is the people of God. Jerusalem is believers. God will see us as a husband gazes upon the beauty of his wife walking down the aisle to meet him. Now, the groom doesn't typically take long to get ready for a wedding. Throw on the tux, brush his teeth, maybe comb the hair, and get someone to pin on the flower. Brides, on the other hand, can take more than a few hours to get ready for a wedding. Hair and makeup and nails take a bit of time to get just right. If you've been to a Nuer or Kunama wedding, the brides often have beautiful henna tattoos applied that must take hours to complete. The dress is carefully picked out and put on. The maid of honor is making sure everything is just right. The bride is beautiful, perfect for her wedding day.

In this life we have scars from the times others have sinned against us. Sometimes these scars from abuse and betrayal are wounds that never fully heal in this world. In this life we have scars from our own foolish sins, guilt and shame that cling to us and drag us down. In this life we struggle and may not consider ourselves to be spiritually beautiful. Thanks be to God that he makes all things new. He clothes us in Christ's righteousness which covers all our blemishes, wounds and scars. He adorns us with the beauty of forgiveness and looks upon us as a husband gazes upon his bride on their wedding day. This is why we will not give up no matter what struggles come to us in this world. Our God has chosen us, forgiven us and clothed us with true beauty. The day is coming when we will see it too.

We do not give up on the Lord because...

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away. The one who was seated on the throne said to me, "Look, I am making everything new!"

The time is coming when we will not cry over broken bones or broken relationships. The time is coming when we will not mourn over the death of a loved one or the pain of disease. The time is coming when the curse of sin will be done away with. Of course, we will not know how long we must wait for the great and glorious day of the Lord. But with confidence in the Lord's promises in Revelation 21, we can wait one more day. We can struggle one more day and then one more day after that. We will not give up to temptation and sin. We will not give up on the Lord. There is certain hope in the One whose "*words are trustworthy and true.*"

Finally, Jesus says to John and to us: *It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To anyone who is thirsty, I will give freely from the spring of the water of life.*

Though we feebly struggle now, we will in glory shine when Jesus returns. We will drink freely from the water of life and live forever with our Savior. While we wait, we can also drink from the living water that Jesus offered to the Samaritan women at the well in John 4. Christ is the living water, offered freely to all. Drink from his Word, believe his promises, trust what he reveals to John in Revelation 21. This water of life will sustain you until we join all the saints in the new heaven and new earth and dwell with our Savior forever.

Amen.